



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
San Francisco District

Regulatory Branch
1455 Market Street, 16th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103-1398

SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT

PUBLIC NOTICE

Project: Travis Air Force Base C-17 Landing Zone

NUMBER: 2008-00138N

DATE: October 10, 2008

RESPONSE REQUIRED BY: October 25, 2008

PERMIT MANAGER: Bryan Matsumoto

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1. **INTRODUCTION:** Mr. David Musselwhite, 60th Civil Engineer Squadron, Department of the Air Force, 411 Airmen Drive, Travis Air Force Base, CA 94535, (707) 424-7515, has applied to the United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), through his agent CH2M Hill (Point of Contact: Mr. Michael Clary, 2485 Natomas Park Drive, Suite 600, Sacramento, CA 94901, (510) 610-3007), for a Department of the Army Individual Permit to construct a new landing zone/runway at Travis Air Force Base (AFB), located 7 miles east of Fairfield and 7 miles south of Vacaville, Solano County, California (Figures 1-2). Construction of the project would result in the permanent fill of 1.52 acres of jurisdictional water of the U.S. The duration of authorization, should it be accepted, would be for five years from the date of the permit issuance. This application is being processed pursuant to the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Section 1344).

2. PROPOSED PROJECT:

Project Site: The proposed Travis AFB C-17 Landing Zone project (Project) site is located on approximately 130 acres directly south of an existing runway 03 Right-21 Left (03R-21L) within the 6,900 acres of land that encompasses Travis AFB in Solano County, California (Figures 1-2). The land surrounding the proposed Project site is generally open with an Outer Perimeter Road bordering the site to the east and south.

The Project site is considered by Travis AFB to be “semi-improved” grounds due to its

proximity to Runway 03R-21L, and receives scheduled maintenance several times per year, consisting of mowing, to reduce the potential for wildfires.

The Project site generally drains to the northeast, and receives water from direct precipitation, and a drainage ditch that bisects the site. It is dominated by non-native annual grassland, consisting of wild oats (*Avena sativa*), soft chess (*Bromus mollis*), rip gut brome (*Bromus diandrous*), filaree (*Erodium botrys*), and Medusa head (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*). A wetland delineation verification was completed by the Corps of Engineers on April 16, 2008, and verified a jurisdictional drainage ditch (0.77 acre) and jurisdictional seasonal wetlands (3.3 acres) on the Project site. The drainage ditch flows in a northeast direction into another drainage ditch and eventually flows into Suisun Bay. Vegetation within seasonal wetlands on the site consists of Italian rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Mediterranean barley (*Hordeum hystris*), coyote thistle (*Eryngium* sp.), and popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys stipitatus*).

Project Description: The applicant proposes to construct an approximately 17.3-acre landing zone/runway (LZ), adjacent to Runway 03R-21L (Figures 3-6). The LZ construction area encompasses the 17.3-acre LZ and connector taxiways at both ends of the new LZ, and 29.7 acres of grading activities that extend 125 to 145 feet around the new LZ perimeter for staging activities and other ground disturbance activities between Runway 03R-21L and the new LZ. The new LZ

will be 18 inches higher than Runway 03R-21L and will run directly parallel to it starting at its north end.

The LZ construction will require the establishment of a temporary batch plant to manufacture Portland cement concrete and asphalt cement, along with temporary access and staging. The batch plant and access road will be located immediately south of the LZ.

Purpose and Need: The basic Project purpose is to construct a shortened C-17 LZ in the western United States to provide a realistic environment designed to improve landing procedure and execution for pilots in training.

The Air Force and Headquarters, Air Mobility Command, state that they have a need to establish LZs in the western United States where C-17 tactical arrival, departure, and landing training could be accomplished by C-17 aircrews from Travis AFB. This training is required for aircrews to be certified in C-17 operations.

Impacts to Corps of Engineers jurisdiction: The proposed project would result in the permanent loss of 1.069 acres of jurisdictional wetlands and 0.45 acre of drainage ditch. Impacts to wetlands and drainage ditch would include grading and filling for staging and construction of the new LZ.

Mitigation: To compensate for the direct loss of 1.069 acres of seasonal wetlands, and 0.45 acre of drainage ditch, the applicant proposes to purchase 1.6 acres of wetland creation credits from the Elsie Gridley Mitigation Bank for a 1.5:1 mitigation to fill ratio, and re-route the drainage ditch around the new LZ. The re-routed drainage ditch will be monitored for a minimum of 5 years.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is requiring the applicant to protect a total of 105.3 acres of upland habitat for impacts to California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) (CTS) dispersal habitat. In addition, the applicant will restore 23.0 acres of disturbed upland on the project

site within a year from the start of construction.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH VARIOUS FEDERAL LAWS:

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA): The Corps will assess the environmental impacts of the proposed action in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. Section 4371 et. seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations (40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508), and the Corps' Regulations (33 C.F.R. Part 230 and Part 325, Appendix B). Unless otherwise stated, the Environmental Assessment will describe only the impacts (direct, indirect, and cumulative) resulting from activities within the Corps' jurisdiction. The documents used in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment will be on file with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District, Regulatory Branch, 1455 Market Street, San Francisco, California 94103-1398.

Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA): Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) if a Corps permitted project may adversely affect any Federally listed threatened or endangered species or its designated critical habitat.

As the Federal Lead agency, the Department of the Air Force initiated formal consultation with the FWS in a letter dated February 5, 2008. The FWS responded in a letter dated June 12, 2008, which included the FWS's biological opinion on the effects of the proposed action on the threatened California tiger salamander, and their determination that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the threatened Colusa grass (*Neostapfia colusana*), endangered Solano grass (*Tuctoria mucronata*), endangered Suisun thistle (*Cirsium hydrophilum* var. *hydrophilum*), threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), endangered Contra Costa goldfields (*Lasthenia conjugens*), endangered vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardi*), endangered Conservancy fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta conservatio*), and

threatened Delta green ground beetle (*Elaphrus viridis*).

Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act: The NMFS and several interagency fisheries councils have designated specific water bodies as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. Due to the absence of EFH on the project site, no consultation for EFH was deemed necessary or completed.

Clean Water Act of 1972 (CWA):

a. Water Quality: Under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Section 1341), an applicant for a Corps permit must first obtain a State water quality certification before a Corps permit may be issued. The applicant has provided the Corps with evidence that he has submitted a valid request for State water quality certification to the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. No Corps permit will be granted until the applicant obtains the required water quality certification. The Corps may assume a waiver of water quality certification if the State fails or refuses to act on a valid request for certification within 60 days after the receipt of a valid request, unless the District Engineer determines a shorter or longer period is reasonable for the State to act.

Those parties concerned with any water quality issue that may be associated with this project should write to the Executive Officer, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region, 1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400, Oakland, California 94612, by the close of the comment period of this Public Notice.

b. Alternatives: Evaluation of this proposed activity's impact includes application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency under Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Section 1344(b)). An evaluation has been made by this office under the guidelines and it was determined that the proposed project is not water dependent. The

applicant has submitted an Analysis of Alternatives and has been informed that such an Analysis is required and will be reviewed for compliance with the guidelines.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA): Based on a review of survey data on file with various City, State and Federal agencies, no historic or archeological resources are known to occur in the project vicinity. If unrecorded resources are discovered during construction of the project, operations will be suspended until the Corps completes consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA): Section 307(c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1456(c)), requires a non-Federal applicant seeking a federal license or permit to conduct any activity occurring in or affecting the coastal zone to furnish a certification that indicates the activity conforms with the State's coastal zone management program. Generally, no federal license or permit will be issued until the appropriate State agency has concurred with the certification statement or has waived its right to do so. The project does not occur in the coastal zone, and a preliminary review by the USACE indicates that the project would not likely affect coastal zone resources. This presumption on effect, however, remains subject to a final determination by the California Coastal Commission.

4. PUBLIC INTEREST EVALUATION: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impact, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposed activity must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including its cumulative effects. Among those factors are: conservation,

economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

whose name and address are indicated in the first paragraph of this Public Notice or by contacting Bryan Matsumoto of our office at telephone 415-503-6786 or E-mail: Bryan.T.Matsumoto@usace.army.mil. Details on any changes of a minor nature that are made in the final permit action will be provided upon request.

5. CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS: The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State and local agencies and officials, Indian Tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest in the proposed activity.

6. SUBMISSION OF COMMENTS: Interested parties may submit, in writing, any comments concerning this activity. Comments should include the applicant's name and the number and the date of this Public Notice, and should be forwarded so as to reach this office within the comment period specified on Page 1. Comments should be sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District, Regulatory Division, 1455 Market Street, San Francisco, California 94103-1398. It is the Corps' policy to forward any such comments that include objections to the applicant for resolution or rebuttal. Any person may also request, in writing, within the comment period of this Public Notice that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. Additional details may be obtained by contacting the applicant